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AUTHOR Smith, Douglas C.
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ABSTRACT

This essay, prepared with the western reader in mind, attempts to provide a general introduction to the foundations of Chinese intellectual and educational thought and to the unique characteristics that helped form Chinese civilization. Specifically, four factors that influence current Chinese society, and that also interplay with two millennia of Chinese education and culture are examined. These factors are: (1) linguistic patterns; (2) Confucianism; (3) the examination system; and (4) family life. The Chinese written language is not alphabetical and relies on thousands of characters or ideographs for the expression of ideas. It is contended that this form of language, which has endured almost unchanged for 2,000 years, is reflective of Chinese civilization and a leading reason behind the Chinese educational legacy. It also is argued that Confucianism, with its emphasis on human relationships and values and how they may be properly preserved, permeates the Chinese people and their institutions. The civil service examination, which is open, fair, and competitive, has existed for nearly 1,500 years. It has precluded nepotism and favoritism in the appointment of government and state officials and is pointed to as a leading factor in China's peaceful history. Finally, Chinese family life, with its emphasis on orderliness and tradition, is pointed to as playing a major role in the lives of the people and their educational institutions. A 28-item bibliography is included. (DB)

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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHINESE EDUCATIONAL AND
INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT: AN OCCIDENTAL INTERPRETATION

BY

Douglas C. Smith, Ph. D. & C. A. S.

Professor/Coordinator

West Virginia University

Graduate Center

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(The author is senior professor and coordinator of the West Virginia University Graduate Center.
He has written six books and numerous articles on China and Taiwan and is a regular visitor to the Orient.)

INTRODUCTION

This essay, which has been prepared with the western reader in mind, is meant to read straight forwardly, almost as if it were a journalistic account. It attempts to give the reader in the most general way an introduction to the foundations of Chinese intellectual and educational thought and also the unique characteristics that help form Chinese civilization.

Americans have long seen China as both mysterious and wonderful. It is hoped that this article will, for the western reader, clarify various aspects of Cathay, and at the same time contribute to an understanding of the similarities that exist in the human experience.

Chinese education, has a continuous heritage of some two thousand years. Many factors no doubt contribute to this, including the geography of China and the generalization that food supplies in that part of our earth have historically been more abundant than in Europe, Africa, and the other ancient worlds. Yet there are perhaps four broad features of Chinese civilization that, when studied, seem to separate that society's educational legacy from other nations. The intertwining of education with society makes it difficult to suggest that certain features of a nation interplay specifically and actively with the pedagogical process. Reviewing the literature on past and current Chinese education in Taiwan, and reading the history and historical interpretations of that civilization, suggest that certain legacies characterize Chinese education, history and philosophy, and make the educative process most unique.

The features, that are societal in nature but which interplay with two millenniums of Chinese education and culture are: (1) linguistic patterns, (2) Confucianism, (3) the examination system, and (4) family life. It is impossible to determine which of these has had the most profound effect. No doubt other characteristics have also contributed to the vividity of Chinese educational history. These four, however, appear most profound.

LINGUISTIC PATTERNS

Bertrand Russell in his important book, The Problem of China (1922), comes to the conclusion that the Chinese use of ideograms is one of the major features that gives Sinica its distinctive character. Russell, who was in China in the early 1920's as a professor of philosophy at the University of Peking, (and greatly preferred China to Japan), noted that while the written Chinese language (which relies on thousands of characters or ideographs for expression) creates many problems, it also has some distinctive advantages. Other scholars have also come to this same conclusion. It is one of the main qualities that makes the Chinese society and the educative process so unique and one could suggest it has had a profound effect on the stability of that civilization's institutions, particularly its academic vividity.

The Chinese do not have an alphabetical system; that is, letters that are put in a certain juxtaposition to form a word, and hence an idea, do not exist in the Chinese language. Great problems are engendered because of this, such as the use of dictaphones, typewriters, translation of names and foreign words, word processors, and anything that relies on alphabetical order for filing or other conveniences. Yet there are subtle advantages to the Chinese written language over the European and Semitic languages.

The written character to a Chinese represents an idea and not a word. It is essentially self-contained and when put in sequence with other characters it forms a collection of mini-ideas that creates a concept in the mind. The system of the use of ideographics is not totally unique to Westerners; our numerical system is, of course, idea and not sound oriented, and learning numbers is no more or less difficult than learning the alphabet. Phonetic writing, which is currently in vogue in American education, is quite impossible in a pictorial based language. To acquire a strong language base requires sheer memorization of literally thousands of characters. No short cut exists in this process; words quite simply cannot be sounded — or figured — out. Consequently in China children who become part of the school system must follow the most fundamental of all ways to learn their language — memorization.

The same principles of learning language in China are applied to mathematical skills. Mathematics, incidentally, is seen by many as the purest and highest level of intellectual development. As Dr. Chor-Wen Tan, Dean of Cooper Union's School of Engineering in New York City, has suggested, "Chinese have a high regard for education and a gift for detail and precision that enables them to do particularly well in math. The traditional method of learning in China is memorization, for which there is still a place in mathematics study" (New York Times, 1982). There is ample evidence to suggest that Chinese do disproportionately well in the mathematical sciences; their language development, which in the learning process is much like acquiring and understanding of mathematical formulas and which is learned from early childhood, may contribute directly to this.

China has traditionally placed great reverence in age. An equation is often drawn between an aged person and a wise person. Again language plays a part, in that to acquire a large vocabulary in Chinese and hence a greater depth of thought one must spend longer periods of his/her life on memorizing the characters that form the Chinese language. Forty years of study is not unusual to acquire a full vocabulary. Chinese characters can be read throughout the whole literate Chinese population, even though each province and sub-province has its own spoken dialect, and even today the Chinese can read texts that were written two thousand years ago. European languages of just a few hundred years ago are today virtually unrecognizable. Bertrand Russell suggests that the Chinese language has indeed affected the mentality and learning process of China. He quotes in his book the following, written by Mr. Chi Li in Chinese Students Monthly (1922):

Language has been traditionally treated by European scientists as a collection of sounds instead of an expression of something inner and deeper than the vocal apparatus as it should be. The accumulative effect of language-symbols upon one's mental formulation is still an unexploited field. Dividing the world culture of the living races on this basis, one perceives a fundamental difference of its types between the alphabetical users and the hieroglyphic users, each of which has its own virtues and vices. Now, with all respects to alphabetical civilization, it must be frankly stated that it has a grave and inherent defect in its lack of solidity. The most civilized portion under the alphabetical culture is also inhabited by the most fickle people. The history of the Western land repeats the same story over and over again. Thus up and down with the Greeks; up and down with Rome; up and down with the Arabs. The ancient Semitic and Hametic peoples are essentially alphabetic users, and their civilizations show the same lack of solidity as the Greeks and the Romans. Certainly this phenomenon can be partially explained by the extra-fluidity of the alphabetical language which cannot be depended upon as a suitable organ to conserve any solid idea. Intellectual contents of these people may be likened to waterfalls and cataracts, rather than seas and oceans. No other people is richer in ideas than they; but no people would give up their valuable ideas as quickly as they do

The Chinese language is by all means the counterpart of the alphabetic stock. It lacks most of the virtues that are found in the alphabetic language; but as an embodiment of simple and final truth, it is invulnerable to storm and stress. It has already protected the Chinese civilization for more than forty centuries. It is solid, square, and beautiful, exactly as the spirit of it represents. Whether it is the spirit that has produced this language or whether this language has in turn accentuated the spirit remains to be determined (Quoted in Russell, 1922, p. 327).

Another important feature of the Chinese language is the general absence of concept of tense. It is impossible in European languages to form a sentence without a verb that places the sentence in a time context, e.g., present, past, future. Mandarin Chinese, the language of modern Taiwan, expresses a relative tense. Hence the action or state of being in the sentence is understood by the juxtaposition of words, e.g., the use of a key word that suggests when the action will occur or has occurred. In many Chinese sentences the suggestion of the tense by a key word is absent. The question then is how do Chinese, when speaking, know exactly in what time frame they are dealing. Linguists have come to realize that factors such as the overall structure must be considered if one is to truly understand the Chinese language and its absence of tense. A step further would suggest that the great degree of homogeneity among the Chinese population and the similar lives that so vast a collection of people have lived (and still live) might play a part in their communication skills. Subtle hints, such as body language, symbolic proximity, epistemological parallelism and precognitions, placing words in a certain order, or indicating key reference points that are universally familiar, all tend to contribute to the understanding in all languages of relative tense but more so to Chinese which is devoid of linguistic cases. It is not yet possible to judge fully to what extent the Chinese language relies on nonverbal or non-written signals but there can be little question that the subtleties of the language far exceed what we currently know (Swanson, 1981).

Perhaps the Chinese language at one time in history had inflections, declensions, conjunctives, cases, tenses, and moods. History, however, does not record these as part of the linguistic heritage. Some 40,000 characters make up the written Chinese language, though most people in modern Taiwan probably have a mastery of and use for only four to five thousand. The characters of today, which have evolved from pictures and portrayals of events, are highly complex and can explain virtually every thought, idea, mood, expression, and sense that other languages can. The use of overlays of the original primitive pictorial character has created a highly stylized written language that captures every nuance. Perhaps the clearest advantage to the ideographic language form is that it is absolutely separated from the spoken form. Consequently, Japanese, Koreans, and others who have their own national spoken languages can read quite easily much of the Chinese language. It also unites the people of China no matter what their local, provincial, or regional dialect (over 100 currently exist). Will Durant, one of the greatest of American scholars, when speaking of the Chinese language makes these observations:

... since written language has remained essentially the same while the spoken language has diverged from it into a hundred dialects, the literature of China, written for two thousand years in these characters, can be read today by any literate Chinese, though we cannot tell how the ancient writers pronounced the words or spoke the ideas which the signs represent. This persistence of the same script amidst a flux and diversity of speech made for the preservation of Chinese thought and culture The character of Chinese civilization [as found in modern Taiwan] is symbolized in this phenomenon of its unique script: its unity amid diversity and growth, its profound conservatism and universal continuity (p. 732).

Many have dreamed of a world language that would not infringe on the national preference, that would be free from verbalness, "capable, therefore, of expressing the ideas of different peoples in identical and mutually intelligible ways. But precisely such a sign language, uniting a hundred generations and a quarter of the earth's inhabitants, already exists in the Far East" (Durant, p. 733). And this language, which we in the West find so difficult to understand because of our constructs and biases, has been one key to the splendor of China's civilization in general and its educational legacy in particular.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucius was traveling east and met two children arguing with one another. He asked them what they were arguing about, and one child said, "I say the sun is nearer to us in the morning and farther away from us at noon, and he says the sun is farther away from us in the morning and nearer to us at noon." One child said, "When the sun begins to come up, it is big like a carriage cover, and at noon it is like a dinner plate. So it must be farther away when it looks smaller, and nearer us when it looks bigger." The other child said, "When the sun comes up, the air is very cool, and at noon it burns like hot soup. So it must be nearer when it is hot and farther away when it is cool." Confucius could not decide who was right, and the children laughed at him and said, "Whoever said that you were a wise guy?" (Quoted in Lin, Yu-tang, The Wisdom of China and India, 1942).

Confucius, though not a man of religion, has had on a large portion of the world an influence equal to and perhaps exceeding that of Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed combined. We know a good deal about this man who lived from 551-479 B.C.; in fact, he is probably the most studied person in the history of humankind.

His life is not dissimilar from many others of the age in which he lived; therefore, reviewing his poor family status, and the relationship he had with his mother (she was unwed and his 70-year-old father died when he was three) and his peers, is of little consequence in studying this historical giant. The most notable aspect of his life and his ideas is that they are devoid of religiosity; Confucius and Confucianism are part of the historical and educational legacy of China and not a part of that civilization's complex religious history.

Confucianism can best be defined as humanism; that is, that the pedagogical writings of Confucius as well as his other philosophical explorations concentrate on certain human values. Confucianism excludes metaphysics and concentrates on the values of human relationships. It was the sage's view that one should first be a good son or daughter, a good brother or sister, a good parent, a good friend, and an honest and humane leader, and "if you have any energy left after attending to conduct, then study books."

Confucianism consequently becomes a study of human relationships and how through proper behavior, respect, and honor these relationships can create in a society peace, harmony, and happiness. Reasonableness would be the best word to describe how Confucius would ask people to interact. Confucianism suggests that the highest goal a person can seek is to live a moral life and that all other activities are subordinate to this. And this morality that transcends all other dimensions of the human spirit can only be engendered by education and cultural awareness and by a sense of ethical guidelines learned through the cultivation of rituals, poetics, and music.

The test that Confucius would give to any society to determine whether it had reached what he would see as its highest stage of moral development is whether it produces good sons and daughters, good sibling relationships, good husbands and wives, good friends, and individuals who can understand the psychology of their associates and act in such a manner as to reduce rancor and unhappiness. All of these goals, Confucius felt, could be achieved by diligent study of those aspects of life that were themselves worthy, beautiful, and harmonious.

Confucius' ideals for life and existential man were expressed pithily and eloquently in a paragraph from his study, The Great Learning:

The ancients who wished to illustrate the highest virtue throughout the empire first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their own selves. Wishing to cultivate their own selves, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their own selves were cultivated. Their own selves being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.

Will Durant, who was one of the great admirers of Confucius and Confucianism, suggests that Confucius was able to focus on the essence of life and present a complete guide to behavior. As Durant states:

The world is at war, says Confucius, because its constituent states are improperly governed; these are improperly governed because no amount of legislation can take the place of the natural social order provided by the family; the family is in disorder, and fails to provide this natural social order, because men forget that they cannot regulate their families if they do not regulate themselves; they fail to regulate themselves because they have not rectified their hearts, i.e., they have not cleansed their own souls of disorderly desires; their hearts are not rectified because their thinking is insincere, doing scant justice to reality and concealing rather than revealing their own natures; their thinking is insincere because they let their wishes discolor the facts and determine their conclusions, instead of seeking to extend their knowledge to the utmost by impartially investigating the nature of things. Let men seek impartial knowledge, and their thinking will become sincere; let their thoughts be sincere and their hearts will be cleansed of disorderly desires; let their hearts be so cleansed, and their own selves will be regulated; let their own selves be regulated, and their families will automatically be regulated — not by virtuous sermonizing or passionate punishments, but by the silent power of example itself; let the family be so regulated with knowledge, sincerity and example, and it will give both such spontaneous social order that successful government will once more be a feasible thing; let the state maintain internal justice and tranquility, and all the world will be peaceful and happy. —It is a counsel of perfection, and forgets that man is a beast of prey; but like Christianity it offers us a goal to strike at, and a ladder to climb. It is one of the golden texts of philosophy (pp. 668-669).

Though the great sage's legacy is not as important today as it was prior to the fall of the Ching Dynasty, Chinese scholars in Taiwan still view his ideas and sayings as the cornerstone of their educational system. The noted Chinese scholar Chang Chi-yun in his excellent study, Confucius: A Modern Interpretation (1980), states: "A firm believer in the perfectibility of man, of all men, Confucius took it upon himself to give the common people a chance to share the

knowledge which until then had been a monopoly of the nobility. The Chinese people of successive ages have honored Confucius. He was 'most sagely' and deserved more than anybody else our reverence, but he was first of all 'a great synthesizer' having synthesized the cream of ancient Chinese culture and turned it into a spiritual legacy to be shared by all Chinese and mankind" (Chang, 1980, pp. 1-3).

Dr. Orient Lee, one of the most prolific writers and revered scholars in modern Asia (this writer personally spent a full day in discussions with Professor Lee), offers some insights into the teaching method that Confucius developed in his private school. In Dr. Lee's book, A Short Biography of Confucius (1982), the author notes that Confucius as a young man had a insatiable passion for learning. He accepted the sons of ordinary people, many of whom could not afford the elite private institutions of this period, and in his back yard beneath a leafy apricot tree he gathered around him pupils for their lessons. "Neither he nor his pupils were aware they actually inaugurated the first and the greatest private school in Chinese history." Confucius believed that a child's level of education should be attuned to his level of intellectual and physical development. Payment for the tutorial sessions was made by the students bringing with them items of exchange such as wine, silk, foodstuffs, or wood for fuel.

His curriculum consisted of the six arts: music, mathematics, drawing, calligraphy, archery, and ethics (called Li and literally meaning ritual, etiquette, and law). As the sole teacher at this very idyllic school, Confucius taught all of the subjects himself. By his own admission he learned from his students and from his preparations for his daily sessions. When a student completed his studies he could leave and find employment or return — after experiencing the real world — for further instruction. He was an old-fashioned teacher in many ways. His students were required to respect him and he maintained a proper distance between himself and his charges. This concept of aloofness is not lost on the leaders of modern Chinese government and education. Some three thousand young men had the honor of sitting at the sage's knee; many were to distinguish themselves in government positions or in the arts. It was Confucius' view that the pedagogical process could best be accomplished by diligent and ongoing practice and repetition. "To practice without thinking is to mislead oneself. To think without practicing, on the other hand, is to plunge into peril."

It was Confucius' view that the success of a teacher and the quality of his instruction were more related to his personal intellectual talents and moral behavior than to the intelligence of his students. Confucius, like many modern psychologists, believed that man was born with a natural goodness and only those who were unhealthy or of unsound intellectual development could not benefit directly from learning and formal schooling. The teacher's quality, therefore, is the essential element in quality education. Professor K.M. Tong suggests in his excellent book, Educational Ideas of Confucius (1970), the Confucian model for pedagogical excellence:

a) A teacher should always renew himself. Confucius said, "If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring anew, he may be a teacher of others." So he emphasized a teacher's requirements: the silent treasuring up of knowledge; learning without satiety, and instructing others without being wearied. Which of these things belongs to me? Therefore one must be continually developing his knowledge anew in order to be able to teach others. A teacher who does not educate himself cannot instruct others. However, if he can only be reviewing old knowledge without increasing any new one, he is too conservative. What he can do to the high extent is nothing but transmit the ancient culture to the next generation. He is incapable and disqualified to fulfill the duty of improving civilization and innovating custom. He can by no means be a teacher because he lacks an independent point of view, and active effort to renew himself.

b) A teacher should love his students as well as their intellect. Confucius was a democratic educator. He said, "In teaching, there should be no distinction of classes." No matter what class or clan he is whether he is rich or poor, noble or common, everyone has the same opportunity in education. Once there was a lad of Hushang (a village in which the people were not educated), having an interview with Confucius. It was difficult to talk with the people from the village. Knowing this happening, his disciples worried and doubted. The master reminded them, "I admit people's approach to me without committing myself as to what they may do when they have retired. Why must one be so severe? If a man purify himself to wait upon me, I receive him so purified, without guaranteeing his past conduct." This passage implies that if one who has good intention comes to ask for something, we should receive him without worrying about his past conduct, and at the same time we should not interfere with what he is going to do in future. This is the manner of a sage and also the manner of an ideal teacher.

Confucius was the first philosopher in China who explained the nature of man. However, he did not explain the difference between the good and the bad. He only pointed out, "By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart." In other words, the differences in the character of men were chiefly owing to their habit. Nature is the same in all, and though the physical organism and disposition do differ according to different individuals. Nature is the construction received by man at birth and is then still while it has not been acted on by external environment, then practice forms, as it were, a second nature. (Sic) He who practices what is not good, becomes the mean man, and he who practices what is good, becomes the superior man. In this connection we should be careful in selecting either friends or neighbors for the influence of environment is very strong.

By the end of his career as a teacher Confucius had expanded his lessons beyond the original six to include such subjects as history, literature, and political economy.

A man of simple wants and needs, his brilliance and charisma has passed from his original three thousand students to all peoples of the Orient, and today Confucius' ideas remain in the minds of most intellectuals in East Asia as the most important philosophical and pedagogical propositions of all time.

In conclusion, one can suggest that the legacy of Confucius remains with the people of Taiwan today. Their educational institutions, though not stressing Confucianism as a major part of the curriculum, are in fact products of a society that is molded and tempered by the sage's moral and ethical teachings. Confucianism is so ingrained in the mind-set of China that most Chinese probably do not realize that their every action and thought have been influenced by this greatest of men who lived almost 2,500 years ago. The scholar K.M. Tong has correctly stated in his scholarly book:

Confucian thought was a basic concomitant of Chinese culture, coloring the values of nearly all fields of human endeavor, particularly those conceived with intellectual, social and political activities. In China Confucianism has been a system for regulating the relations of men according to certain beliefs concerning the fundamental forces of morality . . . the great prestige of Confucius and his teaching during the centuries immediately after his death, as well as in subsequent Chinese history, must be ascribed to three factors: the first is the intrinsic appeal of Confucian ideas to the Chinese way of thinking; the second is the historical setting of China; and the third is the evident personal charm and prestige of Confucius himself (M.K. Tong, 1970, p. 1).

THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

Seldom has any group of mankind been so prosperous and so nearly contented as were the Chinese under the governmental machinery when it was dominated by the ablest of civil servants and monarchs. (K.S. Latourette in The Chinese: Their Heritage and Culture, 1934)

In 1905 the traditional examination system of China came to an end. By the end of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1912) China had been badly abused by most of the industrial nations of the world. Yet the open, fair, and competitive examination system that had ensured a dedicated, hard-working, and intellectual civil service system had survived virtually unaltered for nearly 1,500 years. Its strength was that it precluded nepotism and favoritism in the appointment of the highest officials of the state and assured that all officials, even at the local levels of government and education, were of a class that had worked and competed for their esteemed and revered positions. It also allowed the most humble family to hold out the hope that their son would eventuate to a position of distinction in government and/or academic life. Scholars are quick to suggest that this sense of fluidity that was engendered by the examination system may account for the relatively peaceful history of China. Europe, which is much smaller in population and territory than the Chinese civilization, has been constantly at war for the last 1,500 years. Periods of peace in Europe, even until this day, are rare. China's normal state was peace; revolution and conflict were the exception and were normally isolated to the aristocracy and also to regional outburst. The sense of fluidity that the examination created in society and the optimism that all people felt in relation to the children or relatives moving — by way of the testing process — to positions of power is one character in the longevity of China's legacy.

Weaknesses of the traditional examination system are abundant. It tended to create a reactionary point of view in that the examination system relied on memorization, recitation, and analyzation of the ancient classics. When China was confronted with challenges from the technologically superior West and Japan, the leadership in Peking and Nanking could not adequately respond. A second major criticism of the examination system was that it tended to favor children and men of money. To devote ten, twenty, or even thirty years to study and rote learning required a man to have the financial backing that would preclude his need to work in the marketplace or in the fields. Consequently, the examination system tended to favor the middle and upper classes. In numerous cases, however, a poor but brilliant youngster would be supported by his community with the hope that this investment would be returned many-fold when the scholar-examinee achieved his success. Another problem of the examination system was that such great importance was placed on it as a means of upward mobility that every conceivable method to "beat the system" was employed by the Chinese student-scholar. We in education today lament the many attempts that students make to cheat; one can only imagine the ingenuity that an examination system like the one in traditional China would foster. Surrogate examinees, payment of officials, using old essays, invisible ink — all are part of the recorded history of the examination system. These problems and inconsistencies were the exception. For some 1,500 years the competitive government-sponsored examination system functioned remarkably well in ensuring scholarly officials and distinguished academicians and intellectuals. The legacy of the examination system can be seen in modern Taiwan where great stress is placed on testing as a means to get into the academic and vocational high schools, and particularly as an avenue of admission to tertiary education. Problems still exist, but it is this writer's view that no better system has yet been devised by humankind to achieve the aims of an open, ethical, and fluid educational system. Thomas Jefferson, one of America's most distinguished presidents and no doubt the most scholarly, presented in his writings on education a theoretical system that if enacted would have resembled surprisingly closely the Chinese competitive examination and education system. The legacy of the open examination

lives today in Taiwan. The remainder of this section will be devoted to a brief history of that system and also to a review of how it functions in modern Taiwan as a vehicle for admission into the higher levels of academe.

Two of the most authoritative books on the subject, written in English, are Ichisada Mujazoki, China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examination System of Imperial China (1963) (translated from Japanese), and Wolfgang Franke, The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System (1960), (written when the author and his Chinese wife were Visiting Fellows at Harvard). Numerous other studies have been done; most however, are in Chinese or Japanese. Because of the succinctness and felicity of the aforementioned books they will form the base for much of the remainder of this section on one of China's main educational legacies.

The genesis of the examination system can be traced to the Han Dynasty (201 B.C.-8 A.D.) when, due to a collapse in the central authority of the Emperor, an attempt was made by the imperial house to regain control of the society. The Emperor requested that the feudal princes who had titular control over the vast provinces of China, send men of quality to the court to be appointed as civil servants. These men, in the latter part of the Han, would compete with each other, through tests of various sorts, for the better positions in the government. It was during the Han also that the Confucian classics were first used as the device to test aspiring young civil servants. The scholar-official would be responsible to the Emperor for his appointment. A two-way control system was established: the Emperor could count on the appointees to be loyal to him; the scholar-official was indebted to the Emperor for the distinguished appointment he was offered.

Perhaps the main reasons that the Confucian texts were used as the device to examine aspirants were that they were so widespread and accessible and that their ideology of respect for relationships and their agenda for eliminating rancor in society were well in tune with the wishes of the sovereign. Admittedly they are also of great philosophical, intellectual, sociological, and ethical depth and no better scholarship was then — or for that matter is now — available for the instruction of the young in proper, respectful, and moral behavior.

Probably the main rationale for the success and longevity of the examination system was that it placed serious and necessary constraints on the powerful and often highly independent aristocracy that had carved out and ruled large portions of China. The examination was an excellent and popular method during the Han and Liu periods for the Emperor to maintain loyalty in his government officials; it was equally favored by the lower classes who saw it as the only way for their progeny to move into a realm previously the exclusive purview of the nepotistic aristocracy. Public opinion in a nation as large and populous as China can be the sole factor in the survival of a political system, and the Chinese in these early days of their history (and in Taiwan today) see the open examination as a vehicle for social and economic mobility as well as a means of limiting the corruption that is usually associated with inbred aristocratical leadership.

Much of the history of the examination system in China is the story of the literate who have succeeded in their studies and thence received positions of power and esteem from the central government and the challenge to this group by those favoring the concept of inherited positions and titles. Viewing the totality of Chinese civilization by way of the examination, Bertrand Russell in The Problem of China (1922) states: "Among its good effects were: a widely diffused respect for learning; the possibility of doing without the hereditary aristocracy; the selection of scholars and administrators who must . . . have been capable of [great] understanding; the preservation of Chinese civilization in

spite of barbarian conquest" (pp. 46-7). It was no small legacy that those thinkers in the Han Dynasty set out to create when they initiated what was to be the prototype of the examination system!

It was during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) that the examination procedures were to develop into the configuration that survived essentially unaltered until the 20th century. Passing a series of local and regional examinations and the national examination would entitle one to the title of Chin-Shih. The best definition for this Chinese term is "Presented-Scholar" or a person who, by passing through the system of academeocracy, was presented to the Emperor who then bestowed upon him the degree of Chin-Shih. As the scholar moved up the examination procedure, which during the Tang was related to the Confucian doctrine, his chances of success diminished. Only one out of perhaps two to five hundred candidates would receive each year the Chin-Shih; some three thousand might sit for it.

The examinations consisted of an elucidation of the Confucian classics, composing a piece of original poetry, dissertation, and a free discussion on ethics, politics, and historical subjects. Law, calligraphy, and mathematics were later to be added to the examination process. The whole system was placed under the Board of Rites which had succeeded the aristocratic Board of Civil Appointments in 736. The Board of Rites, which was disbanded in the China period, still has many of its legitimate functions carried out in modern Taiwan by the Examination Yuan, one of the important branches of modern Chinese government.

During the Sung Dynasty (960-1279) the process begun in the Han and sophisticated in the Tang reached its fullest level of success. In the Sung the procedure for giving the main examination each three years was developed. Another important change made in this dynasty was that the paramount exam became the one given at the Palace. Consequently, the Emperor (not the examiners or scholars) became the institution that made the final determination as to who would become a Presented-Scholar. The Sung also saw the examination as the almost exclusive way for a person to get a position in government, to acquire wealth and power, and to have prestige. No one, irrespective of his ancestry, could eventuate to a position of influence without successfully fulfilling the demands of the testing procedure. Books became readily available to the populace at large, due to the invention of movable type, and in theory anyone, with few exceptions (e.g., sons of prostitutes, actors, insurrectionists), had the right to sit for the examination. However, as was previously mentioned, only those who could garner financial support to allow them the free time to study could, in fact, prepare for and take the tests. E.A. Kracke suggests in his study, "Family vs. Merit" (1957), that "unless we find other and more convincing evidence to the contrary, we must accept the conclusion that the examination of this period regularly served to recruit into the governmental service a very significant proportion of new blood."

Two models tended to ensure that there would be fairness and impartiality in the examination system during the Sung and after: (1) The name of the candidate was never revealed to the readers of the examination papers (an elaborate number system was used); and (2) the "palace examination" was instituted and the Emperor, supposedly neutral, would review and award the highest degrees. If a large number of offspring of the aristocracy were presented, the Emperor could determine if these men had actually earned the Chin-Shih or had used influence to reach this place in their careers.

Though the Sung regime best exemplified the selection process that came from the competitive examination, the Ming (1368-1662) and the Ching (1644-1912) Dynasties also relied on it to select the leaders of the society. The Ching

was Manchurian and was viewed, of course, as foreign; yet to have a stable and continuous civilization they, like the Yuan Dynasty of Mongolia, relied on the examination system for the appointment of the officials of the empire.

The examination throughout China's long history has been regarded as a major event in the nation's life. Cities that for most of the year were sleepy and traditional would burst into life when the examination was given. Major economic advantage was given to those towns and villages that housed the examination. Even today in modern Taiwan the yearly examinations are a time of preparation, tension, and great excitement. Because the examinations tested students over the same topics year after year, an unparalleled uniformity of thought was enforced not only with the officials of the state but within the mind-set of the whole leading class. As Wolfgang Franke states:

But after neo-Confucian interpretation of the Confucian classics was adopted as state dogma, there remained almost no opportunity for the development of original ideas, for any deviation from the orthodox interpretation led certainly to failure. In this way, particularly from the Ming dynasty on, an unparalleled uniformity of thought was enforced not only among the officials but throughout the whole leading class. The examination system served simultaneously to recruit loyal civil servants of a standard type and to guarantee a thorough indoctrination in the Confucian ideology among the whole educated class, which on its part was the model for the whole population. For over 500 years the traditional Chinese system achieved harmoniously and smoothly, with almost no resort to force, a degree of intellectual homogeneity eagerly sought, but so far scarcely attained, by the modern authoritarian systems (p.13).

The pedagogical process that prepared men for the examination is quite unlike what one thinks of today on hearing the words "school" or "education." Private tutors were employed. The institutions that were the "schools" for these would-be scholars were really limited to places where a person could register for the examination and perhaps get some advice on what books to read and whom he might contact for further instruction. Though these settings were government maintained, they can in no way be considered "schools" as we in the West have come to know that term. Most real education took place in private academies that were set up by communities for their sons. Formal education began when a boy was seven and could continue until he was in his forties. Instruction at the academies centered on the Four Books of Confucius. Memorization, repetition, and an emphasis on self and class discipline characterized these schools. The regard for proper behavior is reflected in the statement, "If education is not strict, it shows that the teacher is lazy." Not surprisingly, this view is held today by the leaders of education in modern Taiwan. Ichisada Mujazoki indicates that a student, to have been successful in his "primary education," would have had to learn 431,286 characters, for that is how many are included in the various standard texts. Many of these characters are repeated in texts, so it was not 431,286 different ideographs; still these had to be committed to memory, and the length of time to do this was six years. Two hundred characters a day were required to be learned if a child was to keep pace with his classmates. Only the most hardy of body and mind could maintain this pace, and a Darwinian view of education — only the most fit shall survive and rule — cannot be disregarded when one looks at traditional Chinese education and examinations.

In summary, the Chinese examination system prior to 1905 had as its strengths the following characteristics: it was open to all qualified applicants; it was a fair system for all who were able to compete; it allowed the government of China to have persons of new ideas in leadership positions; it diminished the influence of the traditionally powerful inherited aristocracy; and it gave a sense of serene peace to even the humblest family in that they knew that their son or grandson or his sons might be a great leader if he applied himself to his studies.

A review of both the classical and modern examination process that has been (and remains) at the heart of all Chinese education suggests that this concept has survived in spirit and fact because it has served the civilization of Cathay so admirably. Changes and modifications have been part of the process since the Han period; yet the essential dynamic of the examination and its *raison d'être* have remained as one of the consistent institutions of this most splendid civilization. "By this system," states Professor Durant, "the national mind and ambition were turned in the direction of study, and the national heroes and models were men of culture rather than masters of wealth."

FAMILY LIFE

By building the house on a sound foundation the world is made secure.
— Confucius

What the Chinese best know, cultivate the most, and have brought the greatest perfection, is morality.
— Voltaire

Family life and the concept of centralization are interwoven into the fabric of Chinese history, life, and education. Though these two characteristics that have dominated Chinese history for thousands of years are not unique to Sinica, they have individually and co-supportively played a larger part in that nation's protracted civilization than in any other nation.

Family life is the central institution for all that happened in traditional China; it continues to play a major role in the life of modern Taiwan's people and interacts directly with the educative processes of the island society. Though the traditional extended family in which many generations would live in the same home or compound has disappeared from most of the Taiwan landscape, the concept and the influence of "family" remain a dominant factor in social and economic vitality. Nucleus family models — where a husband, wife and children (average three in Taiwan) live in the one domicile — are now very common. Only on the larger farms in the beautiful countryside of Taiwan can one find grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts, children and their spouses, and grandchildren living in the same large U-shaped, single-level home. Urbanization and industrialization have led to two dynamic qualities that have slowly eroded the extended family — fewer children generally are born to urban families, and industrialization has tended to give younger persons greater economic independence and, as a consequence, less eagerness to remain under the watchful eye of their parents or grandparents.

Traditionally the senior male of a family, if his health allowed, would rule the household till his death. He would be followed by *de facto* rule of his wife; real power would, however, go to the next oldest male, usually the first son. Children, because of economic dependence, the honor of the family name, and the Confucian ideal of reverence to one's elders and of one's ancestors (*filial piety*), would remain part of the surname structure and take their place in the elaborate schemata that characterized the Chinese family constellation.

Structural relationships and authority are the recurring themes in the Chinese nucleus and extended or "grand" family. Yet these are only a microcosm for a more broadly based set of interpersonal interactions and constellations. Traditional China held that the father-son dominant-subservient relation was of paramount importance but also four

cardinal relationships among men must exist: the Emperor and his subjects, husband and wife, older and younger siblings, and friend and friend. Sub-relationships that the Confucian ethic emphasized were older and younger, teacher and pupil, gentry and peasant, and educated and illiterate. Unlike the European and Japanese models in which the king or emperor was absolute and thought to rule by heavenly decree for life, the Chinese always held a more utilitarian and democratic vision of their king. This quote written by the eminent Professor James Legge, known best for his translations of the *Analects*, perhaps illustrates the relative position of the king and his subjects. Extrapolation would suggest that the philosophy expressed here was pervasive in most Chinese relationships save the sacrosanct one between father and son.

The Emperor has been uniformly regarded as the son of god by adoption only, and liable to be displaced from that position as a punishment for the offense of misrule If the ruler failed in his duties, the obligation of the people was at an end, and his divine right disappeared simultaneously. Of this we have an example in a portion of the Canon to be examined by and by. Under the year 558 B.C. we find the following narrative. One of the feudal princes asked an official, saying, "Have not the people of the Wei State done very wrong in expelling their ruler?" "Perhaps the ruler himself," was the reply, "may have done very wrong If the life of the people is impoverished, and if the spirits are deprived of their sacrifices, of what use is the ruler, and what can the people do but get rid of him?" (Russell, 1922, p. 59)

There were many advantages to the extended traditional Chinese family. Perhaps the one of most impact was that it created in all members a sense of belonging to a permanent reference group with which they had common goals and aspirations. This psychological dimension has been lost to many of the peoples of China now that single nucleus family life is becoming more the norm. Advantages for education were also pronounced — to enable a bright young man the time and leisure to study for the national examinations that were required for entry into the upper levels of power, a financial support system had to be developed and maintained. The traditional Chinese family, with resources spanning two or three generations and monies centralized in the hands of the senior man or woman, could select the child with greatest potential in academics and, by pooling the family's fortune, ensure him the opportunity to become part of the intelligentsia.

Weaknesses in the traditional family also existed. If a father was unkind this could not be held in check; the wife was often treated scrofulously by the mother- and grandmother-in-law; and young couples had little or no opportunity to choose the life style they wanted. It might be mentioned that until recently marriages were arranged by the families involved, and the two prized commodities sought by in-laws were a family's high economic status and its educational level.

Whether a society as dynamic as modern Formosa can have the best of both worlds — orderliness and traditions within the family configuration and at the same time economic development, social mobility, world interrelatedness, and rapid academic climbing — is impossible to presage. The social anomalies related to youth that plague America, Western Europe, Hong Kong, and Japan may find their way into Taiwan and have a potentially deleterious effect on that society's amazing growth and development. Perhaps, though, the four thousand years of Chinese history which has culminated in the society that now exists in Taiwan will preclude changes that will threaten the better traditions and values of Chinese life.

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